2001

MERS

USERS'

SURVEY

X

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Responses

Contact group	# sent	# returned	% return
Deaf individuals	100	41	41%
Hearing individuals	40	12	30%
Business	40	9	23%
Voice Carryover Users	20	6	30%
Total	200	68	34%

Cities/Towns included in response group:

Alfred (1)

Auburn (7)

Augusta (1)

Bangor (6)

Bridgton (1)

Bucksport (1)

Calais (1)

Carmel (1)

East Waterboro (1)

Embden (1)

Etna (1)

Gardiner (1)

Glenburn (1)

Gorham (2)

Gray (1)

Greene (1)

Hampden (1)

Harpswell (1)

Hudson (1)

Jay (1)

Lewiston (2)

Limington (1)

Minot (1)

Pittsfield (1)

Portland (11)

Pownal (1)

Presque Isle (1)

Saco (1)

Sanford (1)

Scarborough (2)

Sebago (3)

Sidney (1)

South China (1)

South Portland (2)

Van Buren (1)

Westbrook (1)

Windham (2)

Yarmouth (1)

unknown (1)

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Features & Relay #'s used

Question: What feature is most important to your use of MERS?

	TTY	Voice	VCO
Deaf responses	39	4	2
HOH responses	1	1	3
Hearing responses	6	7	0
Business responses*	4	3	0

* includes both hearing and deaf responses

Question: Which relay number do you use regularly?

	711	955 numbers	800 numbers
Deaf responses	25	1	18
Hearing responses	4	3	8
HOH responses	4	1	2
All responses	33*	5	28*

* some respondents listed both 711 and 800, in some cases with explanation
  that 711 doesn't work for cell phones or in specific locations

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Comfort w/ MERS & AT&T Profile

How Do You Feel About Using MERS? (59 responses)

	Comfortable w/ MERS	Don't Know How to Use	Want More Experience	Not Comfortable
Deaf	32	2	3	1
Hard of Hearing	5	0	0	0
Hearing	15	0	0	1
All Responses	52	2	3	2

Are You Satisfied with ATT Profile via MERS? (58 responses)

	Yes	No	Don't Know What It Is
Deaf	19	5	15
Hard of Hearing	4	0	1
Hearing	7	0	7
All Responses	30	5	23

Among deaf respondents, 51% either don't know what ATT Profile is or are not satisfied with it.

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Problems with 711

Question: Do you have any problems dialing #711 to reach MERS?

	Yes	No
Deaf	14	20
Hearing	3	13
Hard-of-Hearing	0	5
Total	17	38

Comments:

1. not try yet
2. sometimes I do not receive a response of any kind
3. my tty will not work with 711
4. too slow to answer, always busy
5. sometimes it takes a little longer to wait
6. they take forever to respond
7. at my work, it won't go thru so I use 1-800-#
8. when I use cell phone, can't reach 711
9. can't use on cell phone
10. slow answer
11. waiting too long
12. not connecting
13. long wait, sometimes no answer
14. no work about 4:30 a.m.
15. can't get thru
16. cell phone - doesn't work
17. at school phones don't work, have to use 1-800
18. had problem with cell phone

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Problems with 1-800 #'s

Question: Do you have any problems dialing 800 numbers via MERS?

	Yes	No
Deaf	7	33
Hearing	0	14
Hard-of-Hearing	0	5
Total	7	52

Comments related to "Yes" answer

1. I have hard time to get thru

2. because I type a long story one time

3. Get immediate answer

4. sometimes have to wait turn

5. often slow, did not answer sometimes

6. can't connect many times

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Contacting MERS -- busy signal and wait time

Question: When you dial the number for MERS, do you ever get a busy signal and have to redial?

	Yes	No
Using 711	12	15
Using 955	2	3
Using 1-800	10	17
Total	24	35

Question: When you call MERS, do you get a response, more than once, that says "Please hold for the next available CA" ?

(58 responses)

	Yes	No
Total	34	24

Range of "yes" answers:

1 - 2 times	3
2 - 3 times	8
3 - 4 times	7
5 - 9 times	4
10 - 12 times	2
sometimes	2
few times	3
a lot	2

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Problems with Communication Assistants

Question: Have you had any problems with the Communication Assistants (Cas) during this year (2001)?

	Yes	No
Deaf	10	28
Hearing	2	13
Hard-of-Hearing	2	3
Total	**14**	**44**

Explanations with "Yes" Answers

some were very cold and monotonous

they hang up before I am done

problem w/ phone line or tty device, sometime CA doesn't know how to dial in local area with 800's

they bill me for what I didn't use - operator assisted calls

misspelled names

sometimes they are rather confusing. I think they make stuff up sometimes.

not enough respond, slow not move quick when communicate

dialed wrong number twice

they keep asking me to repeat from garbled msgs.

wait too long to relay what deaf person is typing, should speak as soon as deaf person begins typing

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Problems with Local Phone Company

Question: As a MERS user, do you have any problems with your local telephone company, such as billing, special discount, talking with telephone employees, directory instructions, or other problem?

	Yes	No
Deaf	6	32
Hearing	0	14
Hard-of-Hearing	2	6
Total	**8**	**52**

Comments regarding problems:

Deaf person:	double charge me for local calls for one LD call; charge me for operator assisted calls which were not.
Deaf person:	sometimes I suspected that it wasn't honest bills; it is very hard to track with bills.
Deaf person:	I thought my billing discount was 70%; I don't understand bills
Deaf person:	discounts get taken off only some months; phone cards for portable ttys difficult to use.
Deaf person:	70 percent off not working
Deaf person:	"they don't say much; not comfort with us much"
HOH person:	it should cost much less because of time on TTY because of deafness
HOH person:	wouldn't give discount

12/18/2001
jjb

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Suggestions

1. show that intonation is healthy & that they do not have to robotic

2. need to understand how our feeling as response, be nice as listen and be patient as friendly, know as
3. experience w/ deaf people

4. Omit "Waiting for" I like to see faster response than waiting when I call someone & they have answering machine. I want to type msg as CA follow me what I say then hang up. Not wait for CA to re-do msg. -- waste my time, charge more money as every min

5. workshop on language communication

6. improve fast service!!

7. make sure the other line say the same thing

8. pls stop w/ pls hold for available CA -- I hate it!

9. I liked the ideaf of via internet for relay on computer

10. do more surveys, push MERS ATT to improve svs. & faster respond to 711, and 711 doesn't work with cell phones

11. stubborn svs.; they don't care

12. need to speed up response, like what if emergency

13. more outreach to public

14. better screening & training for CA's

15. better training in people skills for CA's & typing skills

16. does great job

17. need more of outreach & publicity. I regularly get calls from agencies/professionals w/ questions about relay.

Maine Telecommunication Relay Services Advisory Council
Evaluation Committee Report and Recommendations

The Evaluation Committee met two times to review the information gleaned from the survey forms mailed to MERS users. Based on the survey data, the Committee has developed several recommendations to present to the full TRS Advisory Council.

The MERS users who received survey forms were selected on a random basis from the Maine TTY directory. Two hundred surveys were mailed out, including 100 to deaf individuals, 40 to hearing persons, 40 to businesses and government offices, and 20 to Voice Carryover Users.

The Evaluation Committee submits the following recommendations to the Advisory Council for approval, based on the survey results:

Recommendation One:

The Advisory Council recommends and requests that the Public Utilities Commission annually inform and remind each of the competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) operating in Maine that its telephone system must be capable of directing 711 calls to the Maine Relay Service.

Recommendation Two:

Based on recent survey results, the Advisory Council recommends that AT&T continue to provide training to its Communication Assistants (CA's) in "people skills" and attitude.

Recommendation Three:

Information collected from a recent survey of MERS users indicates that a good number of callers experience a long waiting time before the call connects to the Relay Service and up-front automation (UFA) begins. The Advisory Council requests that AT&T condition or adjust its up-front automation so that phone calls to MERS are answered after no more than three rings.

Recommendation Four:

The Federal Communications Commission requires that the TRS answer 85% of all calls within 10 seconds, so that each caller's call is immediately placed. According to the technical standards established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the 10-second period begins when the call is delivered to the TRS center's network and ends when a CA answers and is prepared to place the call.

Information provided by AT&T indicates that its "speed of answer" data are developed by measuring the time from when UFA ends until the point when a CA answers the call. That time period appears to measure only a portion of the call process included in the FCC requirement.

The Advisory Council requests that AT&T verify that its "speed of answer" measurement and statistics are in accordance with FCC requirements. If the AT&T statistics do not measure the full time-frame required by the FCC, the Council requests that AT&T alter its measurement so that its answer performance reports will comply with FCC requirements.

Recommendations Five

Recent survey results and other input from TRS users in Maine indicate that relay calls placed by dialing 711 take a longer time to be answered than calls placed by dialing one of the 1-800 access numbers. The Advisory Council requests that AT&T investigate whether and why this is true. If so, we ask whether there are actions that AT&T can take to shorten the length of time that it takes for a 711 call to be connected to the relay service and start UFA.

Recommendation Six

Recent survey results indicate that MERS users may find it difficult to determine if their telephone bills reflect application of the 70% discount for intrastate long distance telephone calls. The Advisory Council recommends that the Telephone Association of Maine (TAM) Investigate its members' billing processes to determine the feasibility of adopting a method to assure that customers receive information with each applicable billing statement that indicates that a 70 percent discount has been applied to qualified calls.

Recommendation Seven

Survey results indicated that approximately 50% of deaf MERS users are not using AT&T Profile successfully. MERS users either report that they are not satisfied with Profile or that they do not know what it is. The Advisory Council therefore recommends that the MERS Outreach Program provide additional information and assistance to the Deaf Community so that its members can benefit from the faster processing of relay calls made possible by using the Profile mechanism.